

Implementing Change: A Reader's Theater

Characters:

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| ❖ Narrator | ❖ Custodian |
| ❖ Principal | ❖ Bus Driver |
| ❖ Secretary | ❖ Student 1 |
| ❖ Teacher 1 | ❖ Student 2 |
| ❖ Teacher 2 | ❖ Parent 1 |
| ❖ School Cook | ❖ Parent 2 |

Part One

Narrator: It was a beautiful Monday morning when the Principal of Lightner High School arrived in a very motivated and excited mood.

Principal: *(comes in the door)* Good morning my trusty secretary!

Secretary: It looks like you had a great weekend!

Principal: Oh, I did! I read an article this weekend about how society is slowing killing themselves by not getting the proper amount of sleep. As you may already know lack of sleep can lead to high anxiety, emotional instability, and even a weak memory. The article went on to say that students from the ages of fifteen to eighteen need nine and one quarter hours of sleep in order to function to the best of their ability. It also pointed out that teenagers go to bed much later in the evening than what most adults would consider normal for waking up at 6:00 a.m. for school.

Secretary: Wow. That article does sound very interesting. But, I have a feeling there is more to your jovial mood. What is making you so happy?

Principal: I am happy because I now know how to solve all of our problems! I can fix our issues with truancy, tardiness, students sleeping in class, and many of our behavior problems!

Secretary: What? What are you going to do?

Principal: Why institute a later start time for school of course! We are going to start school later each day. Please send out this memo to all of our school's staff, students, and families ASAP. This is going to be great!

Narrator: The secretary is shocked by this sudden announcement from the principal but is too intimidated by his or her supervisor to disagree. He or she hurriedly runs off 700 copies of the principal's sudden memo and stuffs envelopes with a fury. Meanwhile teachers are beginning to find the strange memo that has been placed in their mailboxes.

Teacher 1: (*Ruffling through the papers in her mailbox*) Important memo!? From the Principal? What? All staff must report to school at 8:30 each morning? Why that's an hour later than our current start time! How can this be? Just wait until Teacher 2 hears about this!

Teacher 2: (*Arrives at mailboxes*) 8:30 in the morning? Really!!! ALRIGHT! I can still come in at our usual 7:30 time and have a whole hour extra in my day to work on lesson plans, grade papers, and collaborate with other teachers. Think about all the work we could get done! Plus the students would be getting more time at home in the morning to sleep! I am sure that their mental and physical health will improve...

Teacher 1: (*Finally seeing Teacher 2*) Teacher 2! Did you read the memo from the principal? This late start time is crazy! Has the principal lost his or her mind?

Teacher 2: Yes isn't that great! I am going to continue to come at our normal work time and get oodles of work done! Don't you just love it?

Teacher 1: Well, I don't know. I don't think I do love it. My own kids are in day care and I have to pick them up by 5:00 every day. If our students start school at 9:00 a.m. and get done at 4:00 p.m. that means my track practice will go to 5:30 at night. (*Starting to get angrier*) What am I supposed to do with my own child? What about the parents and the support staff? How will their schedules be affected? What is the reasoning for this anyway? Did the school board even approve of this?

Narrator: The teachers are not the only ones confused about the new change. The time that the school day begins and ends affects a plethora of other staff and service members...

Custodian: (*Barges into the Principal's office frustrated with the changes*) Principal! How can this be? We are starting school at 9:00 and ending the school day at 4:00? I have support staff coming in at every day at 3:00 and they won't even begin to start cleaning the floor until 4:00 each day? How are they supposed to start cleaning the floor at 4:00 and still get done at a reasonable time? That's not even taking sporting events into consideration!?! What were you thinking? (*storms out the office*)

Bus Driver: (*Calls the principal on the phone*) Hi Principal? This memo is crazy! I mean you have to be really nuts to think that I am going to change all my routes for just your high school. I will get there when I get there! I have other schools that I need to pick up and deliver students to. We have a contract pal, you'll be receiving a call from my lawyer! (*Hangs up*)

School Cook: (*Crying in office*) Breakfast. Lunch? Three different classes of 200 students? How will I get this worked out? Who will be here for the food delivery? How am I going to tell my staff that they have to stay every day until 2:00? (*Resumes crying*)

Narrator: As our Principal begins to learn of the implications for his or her actions they begin to worry that perhaps they acted too impulsively. Meanwhile in Lightnerville parents are just receiving their memos in their email inboxes.

Parent 1: What's this? A new start time for the high school? What am I going to do with my children when I'm at work? I need my high school student at home at 3:00 to watch their younger siblings. This can't be true. I am going to call Parent 2, he or she is the president of the PTO. He or she will know what to do! (*Picks up the phone*)

Parent 2: (*Tired from the ten phone calls he or she already received*) Hello Parent 1. Yes, I did see it. The Principal can't do this without permission from the school board, rest assured. I am going to call the President of the school board right now and get this thing straightened out.

Narrator: By the end of the day our spontaneous Principal receives a phone call from one very angry School Board President. The Principal is informed that he or she does not have the authority to implement such brash and unfounded change and to desist all school start time discussion for the remainder of the school year.

Principal: (*Moping in his or her office*) Why can't they just see how great this will be for everyone? Throughout grad school I dreamed of making schools a better place for children. I really believe that a later start time will benefit high school students. Can't everybody see that they need more sleep? I feel defeated. I guess it's status quo from now on.

Narrator: Poor Principal. Implementing change within a school system can be difficult. What should the principal have done? How could he or she have handled this differently? Does the audience have any suggestions? (*Pause for oodles of audience participation*) Let us continue our story and see if the genius who wrote this reader's theater gives us a better outcome for our naïve leader...

Part Deux

Narrator: It was **still** a beautiful Monday morning when the Principal of Lightner High School arrived in a very motivated and excited mood.

Principal: Good Morning wonderful secretary!

Secretary: Why good morning Principal! It seems like you had a great weekend.

Principal: I did. I found a wonderful article by the National Sleep Foundation about sleep deprivation and its effect on teenagers. I cannot wait to share the articles with our staff. It has really inspired me to lead a discussion on school start times. Secretary would you please do me the kindness of sending out a copy of this article to the teachers? Please ask them to read the article and be ready to discuss it at our next staff meeting.

Secretary: Will do boss!

Narrator: Now the principal has started to get the ball rolling. What ball? The principal would like to see the daily schedule look different, but he or she knows that in order to implement change they must get buy in about the change from the staff and district parents. The first step to introduce the topic of change in relation to the goal of said change. Our now wiser Principal is doing that by passing out the article and instructing staff to read it hoping that this inspire discussion on the issue. The next step this now clever leader is going to try to identify the staff who he or she believes can help with the change.

Principal: (*Goes to Teacher 1's classroom*) Hi Teacher 1. I was hoping you had the chance to read the article that Secretary left in your mailbox.

Teacher 1: I sure did. Sleep studies can really be interesting.

Principal: Glad to hear it. Would you like to be part of my new committee on school start times?

Teacher 1: Sure. I would love to!

Principal: Fantastic. Talk to Teacher 2 and see if he or she would like to join us, would you?

Narrator: Now that our new hero (or heroine) has successfully set up a committee to research all options the Principal moves to meet with support staff.

School Cook: (*walks into meeting with Principal*) Hi Principal, I really appreciate you calling this meeting to make sure that my department is part of the talk on school start time change.

Custodian: Yes, I agree. School start time greatly affects us all and I appreciate being part of the discussion as well. Considering this change won't be implemented until next school year I feel confident that whatever you decide my department will have time to prepare for it.

Narrator: Now that the Principal has formed a school start time committee and has briefly discussed the possibility of change with school staff he is ready to introduce the idea to the school board with permission of his or her superintendent. The enlightened Principal knows that he wants to give the school board a taste of what is "coming down the pipe" so that they will warm to the idea in the future. After a successful meeting with the school board the Principal feels confident to introduce the new initiative to the president of the PTO.

Parent 2: (*Answers the phone and it's the principal*) Hello? You would like to hold a special PTO meeting to discussion parent's opinions on school start times? Sure! That sounds like a great idea. How about Monday after school?

Narrator: Over the next several months the Principal and the new school start time committee work diligently to research options for their school's start time. After several months of work they feel confident and present their ideas to the school board for a vote. It seems that the principal was much more successful in part two of our story. What did the principal do differently that ensured success? What steps would you take to implement a large scale change like school start time?